

Labor News

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Presenting to the workers and the public the facts concerning matters affecting labor and the wage earner's interests at large. Constructive in policy and non-partisan in politics. Free from domination by any interests or factions, either within the labor movement or without.

An exponent of justice to all, a square deal to employer and employee alike, with a desire to serve the best principles of trade unionism and at the same time create a better understanding and co-operation between capital and labor.

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EMPLOYEES PLACED IN BONDAGE

No plan has yet been evolved that insures the large measure of protection and benefit to the wage earner as do the voluntary organizations of trade or labor unions and the economic power that comes from such uniting in a common cause.

New force is given to this assertion by recent reports of investigations made of "company unions" by the Russell Sage Foundation of New York. The Rockefeller plan, introduced in Colorado in 1915, was the first of a number of "plans" that have since been tried out by captains of industry in a vain effort to break down the organized labor movement.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., visited Colorado soon after the "Ludlow massacre" and was convinced that something should be done so he had MacKenzie King, now premier of Canada, set up for the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, a Rockefeller property, a "comprehensive industrial institution" and "republic of labor."

In the ten years of its operation, the Rockefeller plan has failed to win approval of the employees. It is today, as in the beginning, an institution of the bosses for depriving the workers of independent action. As a matter of fact, not a single "plan" or "company union" set up in any industry has had the approval of the employees. In nearly every instance they must "consent" or lose their jobs.

Investigators for the Russell Sage Foundation find that in the steel plant of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company the wages and conditions of labor are fixed not by the Rockefeller union and the management, but by the conditions that obtain in the plants of Judge Gary's United States Steel Corporation, where there is no organization of labor.

On the other hand, wages and conditions in the coal mines of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company are made to conform to agreements between the United Mine Workers and other coal companies. In other words, Rockefeller coal miners in Colorado benefit not by the "plan" but by conditions gained by men working in union mines, while the steel workers do not so benefit for the reason that there is no national organization of steel workers.

Investigators also find that employees of the C. F. & I., as in other industries where the company union has been introduced, are loath to complain of grievances because "the company administers the plan and defrays all expenses." Of course under these conditions there can be no such thing as collective bargaining because the employee representative is never a free agent. He can not put up a fight for the men back on the job.

WHY HENRY FORD IS ALWAYS 'LIVE COPY'

Henry Ford has a manner of doing things so contrary to the ethics of "high finance" and big business that he always makes good copy in newspaper offices, hence can cut down the cost by dispensing with the services of a high salaried publicity agent.

Last week he shocked Wall Street again by an entirely new method of eliminating bank and broker commissions in the sale of railroad bonds. As owner of the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton railroad he had applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission, as required by law, for permission to issue \$1,181,000 of 5 per cent bonds, the money to be expended not for payment of old debts but in the construction of 20 miles of railroad between Flat Rock and Rurban, Mich.

Henry Ford then bought up the bonds at par, with the result that some Wall Street brokers who had expected to handle the issue and were quoting them a "93 bid and 97 asked" had to rub the offering from the blackboard.

Thus Henry put some of his surplus funds to work at 5 per cent interest and the D., T. & I. saves the middleman's commission—that is, the road will receive 100 cents for every dollar's worth of bonds issued. This is not customary in railroad financing.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS BOOST THEIR WAGES

Labor has no quarrel with members of the Senate and House who voted to increase their wages from \$7,500 to \$10,000 per annum, believing in the Scriptural text that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." It is the quiet manner in which the pay boost was put through in both branches of Congress that hurts certain newspaper editors. They say it smacks too much of a fear that the people might not approve and that the members displayed a woeful lack of courage in their convictions.

Besides, it places President Coolidge in a most embarrassing situation. After having vetoed the postal workers' wage increase, can he consistently approve a bill, passed by viva voce votes, increasing the wages of members of Congress? And yet it is voted in Capitol Hill that this had been arranged before the members voted themselves more money.

SETTLING CASES OUT OF COURT

Fresh from the Government Printing office comes a fat volume bearing the title, "Dictionary of Tariff Information." The contents have the approval of the Tariff Commission. They are official.

On page 712, under the heading "Sugar Frauds," appears the following:

"In 1909, under the administration of William Loeb, Jr., as collector of the New York port, it was discovered that extensive frauds had been perpetrated over a series of years by several of the largest sugar-refining companies. WEIGHTS WERE FALSIFIED, SCALES WERE TAMPERED WITH, AND EMPLOYEES BRIBED. The cases against the companies were settled out of court."

The refining companies referred to were controlled by the Sugar Trust.

The trust robbed the government of millions and of course the officials responsible should have gone to prison. They never spent a day behind the bars. The cases were settled out of court. That was during the administration of William Howard Taft, who is now on the Supreme bench.

The government is still after the Sugar Trust. It has continued to defy the law. There is another chance to settle a case out of court. So President Coolidge names Charles B. Warren, the Sugar Trust's man, for Attorney General.

He will know how to settle out of court—to the satisfaction of the Trust.

DECEIVING THE ORDINARY CITIZEN

On March 1, 1920, the Government turned back the railroads to their owners.

On the fifth anniversary of this interesting event the Western Railways' Committee on Public Relations issued a statement summarizing the results of five years of private operation.

It is full of unfair and misleading propaganda of which the following is a fair example:

"Soon after private operation was resumed a large advance in wages was granted by the Railroad Labor Board.

"This in turn was followed by a large advance in freight and passenger rates which was put into effect by the Interstate Commerce Commission at the end of August, 1920."

The ordinary citizen, not familiar with the intricacies of the transportation problem, would infer from the foregoing that the large increase in rates was forced by the large increase in wages.

That was not the case. The total rate increase granted the roads was estimated all the way from \$1,500,000,000 to \$1,800,000,000. Less than \$600,000,000 of this—or about one-third of the total—was on account of wages.

As a matter of fact the workers never received even this third, for the roads immediately launched a campaign to reduce wages and working forces.

Eventually practically every dollar of the increase granted by the Interstate Commerce Commission to cover wages, was taken away from the employees.

Of course, the gentlemen who compose the Western Railways Committee on Public Relations are familiar with these facts.

They placed their signatures to a half truth in order to mislead the public and place the railroad workers in a false position.

HOW OIL CONCESSIONS ARE WON

Poor Albania! It was in a fair way to become happy, prosperous, independent, but some one discovered oil.

Soon the representative of our own Standard Oil arrived aboard an American warship. Anything to make his arrival impressive!

He asked for a concession; more or less exclusive.

The Anglo-Persian Oil Company, British owned, objected. The British foreign office seconded the objection. The Albanian government indicated that it intended to do business with the Standard.

The Anglo-Persian found Ahmed Bey Zogu (splendid name for an adventurer) broke and looking for trouble.

Zogu was supplied with the necessary money and men and last December he marched into the Albanian capital while Premier Fan Noli was proclaiming to the world that the whole thing was irregular and that the League of Nations should intervene.

The league would not stir because it knew the British foreign office was back of Zogu and the Anglo-Persian.

Noli fled and Zogu's first official act was to give the Anglo-Persian its concession in the exact language requested.

That's the way oil runs the world.

CHICAGO FOR MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP

Chicago is preparing to put \$600,000,000 into the largest municipally-owned transportation system in the world.

Existing lines will be taken over and the owners will be paid with certificates secured by the property.

Control will be vested in a board of nine, three named by the mayor, three by the security owners and three by agreement between the mayor and the security owners.

It is estimated that twenty years will elapse before 51 per cent of the certificates can be redeemed and the city placed in control of the property.

There are many objections to this arrangement. It affords a good many loopholes for cunning financiers and crooked politicians.

The most serious menace to the success of the undertaking, however, is the price the city must pay for the existing lines. Labor fears the valuation has been grossly inflated.

Municipal ownership is a good thing but it cannot carry too much "water."

RETAIN THE FEDERAL INHERITANCE TAX

President Coolidge is putting his powerful influence back of the drive to repeal or reduce the federal tax on inheritances.

The principal argument in support of the proposition is that this is a source of revenue which should be reserved to the states.

This sounds plausible but like many plausible arguments it conceals a large-sized "joker."

Florida has a constitutional provision forbidding the levying of an inheritance tax. Nevada has just repealed its inheritance tax in order "to taunt persons of wealth to Nevada to make the state their legal residence." Other states are equally tender in their treatment of the rich.

If the federal inheritance tax is wiped out, multi-millionaires will flock to states like Florida and Nevada, establish a LEGAL residence and dodge all inheritance taxes.

Instead of repealing the federal inheritance tax law, it should be retained on the statute books and its weak points made lawyer-proof.

Greedy Textile Barons Demand Wage Cuts

Utica, N. Y., March —In 22 years stockholders of the Utica Steam and Mohawk cotton mills have received \$16,100,000 in dividends and bonuses and now the mill management demands a 10 per cent wage cut. The amount of stock outstanding is \$7,000,000, or less than one-half of the profits.

Thomas F. McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers, brought out this information in a speech to employees who are striking against the reduction.

"Aside from these dividend payments," President McMahon said, "all expenses and taxes were paid, as well as corporation taxes to the state and nation, leaving in the company treasury a large surplus over and above this 128 per cent paid out in dividends on a \$7,000,000 stock issue during the past 22 years, as well as keeping up improvements on machinery and buildings."

"In view of these facts, does it sound reasonable that the workers in the two mills affected, who have made this return possible, should have their wages cut 10 per cent. at this time?"

NEW INSPECTION LAW

Springfield, Ill., March —Electrical workers are urging the passage of a new inspection law that will replace the old act outlawed by the state supreme court.

Old-Age Pensions Is Urged By Labor

Harrisburg, Pa., March —The state federation of labor has circularized Pennsylvania trade unionists in behalf of the old age assistance law, which has been declared unconstitutional by the state supreme court.

The court upheld a decision by the Dauphin county court that old age pensions is a charity. In their statement to affiliates, officers of the state federation of labor say:

"The judges who have declared that the old-age assistance law is in violation of the constitution of our state, because the payment of pensions to aged workers would be a charitable purpose, do not consider it a charitable purpose when they accept 50 per cent. of their salaries upon retirement, after having been paid from \$10,000 to \$17,500 yearly. To them it is a compensation for the hazard for long-continued public service."

"During the two years the old-age assistance commission has been organized, it has received nearly 5,000 applications from persons over 70 years of age, who are partially, or totally, dependent on charity for their existence. The decision of the courts robbed them of the meager assistance of \$30 a month, which was provided for in the law."

ATTACK PRIMARY LAW

Nashville, Tenn., March —Senator Evans led the fight in the state senate against the federal child labor amendment, and now he wants the state primary law annulled.

RENTS TOO HIGH

New York, March 7.—The Annalist, financial journal, makes this comment on the business situation:

"Prices as the ultimate consumer meets them—and especially rents—are too high for the kind of prosperity that can stand without the prop of quotation marks."

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